

Message Text

PAGE 01 CAIRO 03320 021539Z

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

S E C R E T CAIRO 3320

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS PFOR EG

SUBJECT: SOVIET VIEW ON CURRENT ME SITUATION

REF: CAIRO 3243

1. LEO YEDRASHNIKOV, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF TASS, ASKED TO SEE USINTOFF NOVEMBER 2. DURING COURSE OF CONVERSATION, YEDRASHNIKOV MADE FOLLOWING "PERSONAL" OBSERVATIONS.
2. CURRENT POLITICAL AND MILITARY SITUATION IS NOT PARTICULARLY ENCOURAGING. SINCE END OF HOSTILITIES, BOTH SIDES HAVE MANAGED TO REBUILD FORCES DESTROYED DURING WAR. NOW, BOTH EGYPT AND ISRAEL ARE IN A POSITION WHERE THEY CAN THREATEN EACH OTHER AGAIN. MOREOVER, THERE APPEARED TO BE A DESIRE ON THE PART OF POWERFUL ELEMENTS WITHIN EACH COUNTRY FOR RESUMPTION OF FIGHTING. SITUATION IN EGYPT WAS SUPERFICIALLY CALM; NEVERTHELESS, ELEMENTS OF EGYPTIAN ARMY, PARTICULARLY MIDDLE AND LOWER GRADE OFFICERS, WERE AGITATING FOR A MAJOR MILITARY EFFORT TO BREAK THROUGH ISRAELI LINE TOWARD THIRD ARMY.
3. YEDRASHNIKOV SAID PRESSURE FROM THESE OFFICERS PLUS CONTINUED UNFAVORABLE POSITION OF THIRD ARMY CREATED UNSTABLE SITUATION, AND IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT FIGHTING MIGHT RESUME EVEN BEFORE ARRIVAL OF SECRETARY KISSINGER.

SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 03320 021539Z

4. USINTOFF ASKED WHETHER IN YEDRASHNIKOV'S VIEW SADAT WOULD PERMIT THIS SINCE OTHER INDICATIONS SUGGESTED THAT EGYPTIANS WOULD WANT TO GIVE DIPLOMACY A CHANCE; AND IF SADAT DID NOT AGREE, WOULD ARMY IN FACT RENEW WAR AGAINST ORDERS OF

EGYPTIAN POLITICAL COMMAND? YEDRASHNIKOV SAID THAT ARMY WOULD NOT BEGIN HOSTILITIES WITHOUT ORDERS FROM SADAT. NEVERTHELESS, SADAT WAS UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO ACCEDE TO YOUNGER OFFICERS' DEMANDS.

5. ASKED TO COMMENT ON SIZE OF SOVIET AND OTHER RESUPPLY WHICH HAD CONTRIBUTED TO REBUILDING OF EGYPTIAN ARMY, YEDRASHNIKOV SAID SOVIET UNION HAD DELIVERED "MORE THAN 250 TANKS." (HE LATER AMENDED THIS TO SAY ABOUT A DIVISION.) HE ADDED THAT EGYPTIAN ARMY HAD ENOUGH TANK CREWS TO HANDLE THESE; ALL IT NEEDED WAS THE MACHINERY. HE SAID NOTHING ABOUT OTHER SOVIET EQUIPMENT, BUT ADDED THAT EGYPTIANS HAD WEIGHED IN HEAVILY WITH KUZNETZOV FOR MORE ARMS. AT MOMENT, EGYPTIANS HAD SUFFICIENT AMMUNITION TO CONTINUE THE WAR.

6. REGARDING PERSONNEL, SOVIETS HAD CONTRIBUTED NO MORE THAN THE 70 OBSERVERS SENT TO EGYPT LAST WEEK AS WELL AS THE TECHNICIANS SENT EARLIER. THE OBSERVERS WERE BARRACKED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF CAIRO AND HAD BEEN SENT NOWHERE NEAR THE FRONT. HE STATED THAT THEY HAD ONLY BEEN SENT FOR SYMBOLIC REASONS AND HAD NO PRACTICAL EFFECT. HE CONTINUED THAT EGYPTIANS HAD NOT PAID FOR ANY EQUIPMENT SENT BY SOVIETS SINCE OUTBREAK OF WAR, AND HE DID NOT THINK THEY WOULD; IT WAS OF INTEREST THOUGH, THAT CHAIRMAN OF EGYPTIAN INTERNATIONAL BANK KAISSOUNY WAS PRESENTLY IN MOSCOW.

7. YEDRASHNIKOV ADDED THAT, APPARENTLY, ALGERIANS HAD CONTRIBUTED AN ARMORED DIVISION TO EGYPT IN PAST SEVERAL WEEKS.

8. AT END OF CONVERSATION, YEDRASHNIKOV RETURNED TO SITUATION OF THE EGYPTIAN ARMY. HE REITERATED THAT YOUNGER OFFICERS WERE EXERTING CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE ON SADAT TO RESUME FIGHTING TO ASSIST THIRD ARMY. HE CONCLUDED THAT SOVIETS HAD DONE THEIR BEST TO AMELIORATE SITUATION, BUT HE FELT US MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP. HIS BEST SUGGESTION WAS TO PERMIT GREATER FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT FOR WOUNDED, FOOD
SECRET

PAGE 03 CAIRO 03320 021539Z

AND WATER TO MOVE BETWEEN THIRD ARMY AND MAIN EGYPTIAN FORCE ON WEST BANK. IF THIS WERE DONE AND IF, FOR EXAMPLE, ISRAELIS WOULD PERMIT MORE THAN A TRICKLE OF SUPPLY TRUCKS TO MAKE THEIR WAY TO THIRD ARMY, PRESSURE FOR MILITARY ACTION WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY REDUCED.
SMITH

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